

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SCS-06 CA-01 FAA-00 DOTE-00
COME-00 CAB-02 /030 W
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P 031746Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8792

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E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, CASC, US, UK
SUBJECT: CIVAIR: U.K. TAKES MEASURES TO SHORTEN
STANDBY LINES

REF: A) LONDON 12275; B) STATE 194759

1. SUMMARY: U.K. AUTHORITIES HAVE TAKEN MEASURES TO SHORTEN STANDBY LINES BY MAKING MORE SEATS AVAILABLE ON BOTH SCHEDULED AND CHARTER SERVICES. WHILE THESE MEASURES SEEM UNLIKELY TO HAVE GREAT IMPACT, WE BELIEVE IT BEST TO GIVE THEM A FEW DAYS TO PROVE OTHERWISE. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING OUR VISIT TO DELL, THE U.K. CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (CAA) RECONSIDERED ITS POSITION ON STANDBYS. MICHAEL VIVIAN, THE CAA'S NEW DEPUTY CHAIRMAN AND IN CHARGE IN THE CHAIRMAN'S ABSENCE, CALLED ME LATE AUGUST 2 TO REPORT THAT THE CAA FELT THAT THE LEGALITY OF AIRLINE-MAINTAINED WAITING LISTS OR NUMBERING SYSTEMS FOR STANDBY PASSENGERS IS A CLOSE QUESTION, AND THAT IN VIEW OF THE LIKELIHOOD OF A COURT CHALLENGE BY LAKER IT WAS UNWILLING TO RULE IN FAVOR OF THEM. HE ADDED THAT THE CAA IS SATISFIED THAT ORDER, HEALTH, SAFETY, AND MORALE ARE ALL HIGH ON THE EXISTING
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SELF-ORGANIZED QUEUES, INCLUDING LAKER'S SKYTRAIN LINE AT VICTORIA STATION. NEVERTHELESS, THE AUTHORITY HAS TAKEN MEASURES TO EASE THE SITUATION BY FILLING ALL EMPTY SEATS ON BOTH SCHEDULED AND CHARTER SERVICES.

3. SPECIFICALLY, THE CAA HAS TAKEN THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS, ON A TEMPORARY BASIS:

- A. BRITISH AIRWAYS, TWA, AND PANAM WILL BE ALLOWED TO DRAW IN ADVANCE AGAINST THEIR STANDBY QUOTAS, BUT NOT BEYOND THE QUOTA FOR OCTOBER. (WE UNDERSTAND THAT ANY OTHER AIRLINE'S REQUEST TO BE TREATED SIMILARLY WOULD PROBABLY BE APPROVED.)
- B. EMPTY FIRST-CLASS SEATS MAY BE OFFERED STRANDED STANDBY PASSENGERS.
- C. LAKER AIRWAYS WILL BE PERMITTED, FOR A LIMITED PERIOD, TO CARRY SKYTRAIN PASSENGERS ON ADVANCE BOOKING CHARTER (ABC) FLIGHTS. (IF THEY SO REQUEST, OTHER BRITISH CHARTER OPERATORS WOULD PRESUMABLY BE GIVEN SIMILAR PRIVILEGES, BUT BA, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS ONLY 30 EMPTY CHARTER SEATS AVAILABLE TO THE U.S. BETWEEN NOW AND THE END OF AUGUST.)
- D. THE CAA IS PREPARED TO APPROVE REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL CHARTER FLIGHTS TO THE U.S.
- E. EACH AIRLINE OFFERING STANDBY TICKETS MUST ADVERTISE EACH DAY THE NUMBER OF STANDBY TICKETS IT EXPECTS TO SELL THE FOLLOWING DAY.

4. CAA CONTROLS U.K. CHARTERS ONLY, BUT U.K. DEPARTMENT OF TRADE IS TEMPORARILY PREPARED, AND HAS SO NOTIFIED PRINCIPAL U.S. CHARTER OPERATORS, TO ACCEPT CAB WAIVERS (WITHIN THREE PER CENT LIMIT) OF CHARTERS CARRYING DELAYED RETURNING STANDBY PASSENGERS ON FILL-UP BASIS, INCLUDING EVEN "CHARTERS" CARRYING ONLY SUCH PASSENGERS.

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(MOREOVER, IT APPEARS U.K. DOT WILL NOT LOOK TOO CLOSELY

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AT WHETHER OR NOT PASSENGERS ARE IN FACT "RETURNING".)

5. THESE MEASURES WILL HELP, BUT IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THEY WILL RESULT IN ELIMINATING OVERNIGHT QUEUING UNLESS TWA'S PREDICTION OF SUBSTANTIALLY LESS FULL FARE TRAFFIC IS REALIZED. UNDER CURRENT CONDITIONS, RELAXATION OF THE CAPACITY LIMITATIONS WILL PROBABLY MEAN NO MORE THAN 100 OR 200 ADDITIONAL PASSENGERS PER WEEK, ALTHOUGH THIS CAN BE EXPECTED TO INCREASE SOMEWHAT DURING THE LATTER PART OF AUGUST, DECLINING AGAIN AROUND LABOR DAY. THE CHARTER MEASURES SEEM AT FIRST GLANCE TO OFFER EVEN LESS HOPE. LAKER, FOR INSTANCE, PREDICTS IT WILL HAVE 300 SEATS AVAILABLE ON CHARTER FLIGHTS DURING ALL OF AUGUST. A SINGLE EXTRA SKYTRAIN SECTION HAS MORE IMPACT. (A WORKING LEVEL CAA SOURCE IS IN GENERAL AGREEMENT WITH THIS ASSESSMENT.)

6. I PERSONALLY THINK THAT IT IS FOOLISH TO REQUIRE PEOPLE TO HUNKER DOWN IN THE RAIN ON LONDON STREETS WHEN A MEAT COUNTER NUMBER SYSTEM WITH A MUSTER TWO OR THREE TIMES A DAY WOULD CLEAR THE STREETS. I WILL CONTINUE TO DISCUSS THIS QUIETLY, SO THAT WE ARE NOT UNPREPARED IF THE PROBLEM SHOULD PEAK AGAIN AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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I EXPECT IT WILL TOWARD THE END OF AUGUST. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF CAA STEPS TO PERMIT CREATION OF MORE SPACE I THINK WE HAVE TO WAIT THROUGH THE COMING WEEKEND TO SEE IF THE LINES DO SHRINK. IN THE MEAN-TIME, AVERAGE WAITING TIME FOR SKYTRAIN IS FOUR DAYS AND SPIRITS ARE GENERALLY HIGH. THERE IS A REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT OF SELF REGULATION BY THE QUEUES SO THAT CONTINUOUS ATTENDANCE IS ALLEVIATED. HOWEVER, THE WET WEATHER OF THE PAST FEW DAYS HAS LED TO AN INCREASE IN PASSENGERS' COMPLAINTS TO THE EMBASSY, AND NEIGHBORHOOD COMPLAINTS, PREVIOUSLY FEW, ARE ALSO INCREASING.

BREWSTER

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